



News Release

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
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**CHILD WELFARE SUCCESSES HIGHLIGHTED:
Report includes increased in-home services to families;
fewer children in group homes and shelters; and, more children adopted**

PHOENIX – (July 24, 2007) Arizona child welfare officials today released the agency's latest semi-annual report, revealing successes in serving more children safely at home, having fewer young children cared for in group homes and shelters, and helping more abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes through adoption.

Under state law, CPS must produce the report every six months. The bulletin provides statistical and demographic information on child maltreatment reports and investigations, children in foster care, foster homes and adoption from October 1, 2006 through March 30, 2007.

Ken Deibert, the Deputy Director of the Department of Economic Security who oversees child welfare services, said the report also shows what the numbers mean in terms of the agency's progress in improving outcomes for children and families.

"When you look at data that show that there are 10 children under four years old who were living in shelters, that doesn't tell you a lot," Deibert said. "But when you know that the children were there to prevent their being separated from their siblings and that the number represents a 78 percent reduction over two years in young kids living in shelters, then those numbers mean something real in terms of children's lives and systemic improvement."

Although the care provided to children in group homes and shelters is excellent, the agency views family care as the most appropriate and health setting for children that cannot remain safely in their own homes. This is particularly true for the youngest children, given what research has demonstrated about the importance of early childhood development.

The semi-annual report comes at the same time that the KIDSCOUNT Data Book, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation each year with national comparisons of key indicators of child well-being, focuses on improving services for abused and neglected children. The Data Book, embargoed for release until July 25, acknowledges various partnerships between Arizona's child welfare agency and the community that are making a difference for abused and neglected children.

It also highlights Family to Family, a method of engaging communities in: supporting children and their families to prevent removal; supporting safe reunification of families; or, finding children alternative forever families through adoption in their own communities.

(more)

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Deibert said the agency expects that, as the principles of Family to Family become embedded in Arizona's child welfare practice, more children will be able to remain at home safely or return to their families safely, and the number of children in out-of-home care will continue to decrease.

Highlights of the progress made in the past two years included in the latest semi-annual report released today by the agency include:

- a **78 percent decrease** in the number of children under four years old living in shelter care;
- an **85 percent decrease** in the number of children under seven years old living in group homes;
- a **4 percent increase** in the number of children served safely in their own homes, bringing the total increase in children served safely in their own homes to **67 percent since July 2003**;
- and, a **62 percent increase** in the number of children adopted.

The full report is available on the agency's website at:
<http://www.azdes.gov/dcyf/cmdps/cps/report.asp>.